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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7159
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1640
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 8297
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 7171
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA PRIORITY 4416
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 9527
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 0989
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 7683

UNCLAS TOKYO 002510

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL ASSISTANT SECRETARY

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: JAPAN'S 2009 FREEDOM DEFENDER NOMINATION

REF: A. STATE 98406

1B. TOKYO 02172

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1 (SBU) Mission Japan nominates Hiroshi Kato, Executive Director of Life Funds for North Korean Refugees for the 2009 Freedom Defenders Award.

2 (SBU) Each year, thousands of refugees flee North Korea into China. Once in China, many of the women, who constitute the majority of the refugees, are sold as "brides" or otherwise sexually exploited and abused. If discovered by Chinese authorities, the refugees may be forced back to North Korea where they face imprisonment or possible execution. Mr. Kato co-founded Life Funds for North Korea Refugees (LFNKR) in 1997 to address this situation.

3 (SBU) LFNKR's activities include the following: it works in the border regions to provide refugees with food, clothing, and medicine; it cooperates with sympathetic networks in China to provide shelter to the refugees; it helps those refugees in China and Russia, whose lives are in great danger, enter a third country safely; it provides assistance with school fees to children born of a North Korean mother and a Chinese father (these children do not have Chinese citizenship under Chinese law); it advocates internationally for these vulnerable refugees for their treatment and status to be in accordance with the International Convention on the Status of Refugees; it provides support and assistance to refugees who have settled in Japan.

4 (SBU) Since its founding, the LFNKR has succeeded in resettling hundreds of refugees, often at great risk. Mr. Kato himself was arrested in China on October 30, 2002, expelled on November 6 of that year, and barred from re-entering the country for five years. In February 2009, the North Korean People's Security Ministry issued an arrest warrant for him and three other human rights activists. Mr. Kato and LFNKR have at great risk in a dangerous environment, demonstrated leadership, and creativity at the grassroots level in protecting the lives, and human rights of North Korean refugees, particularly, the women and children whose situation is the direst.

15. (SBU) Mr. Kato was born in Fukushima Prefecture, Japan in 1945. After graduating from Rikkyo University, he worked as a cameraman and journalist in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, and Russia. He is the author of three books: "Reports from Uncharted States," "The Yellow Revolution in

the Philippines," and a photobook about the Karen people of Burma, "Kawthoolei."
ROOS